

# C A A C E

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

March 1, 2010

Testimony on the following bill:

Raised bill No: 5316                      An Act Concerning Enrollment in Adult Education

Submitted by: David Downes, Vice President, Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education and Director of Adult and Continuing Education for the West Hartford Public Schools.

*The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education, a statewide professional organization representing the states' providers of mandated adult education programs.*

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

The Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education would like to comment on Raised Bill No. 5316, An Act Concerning Enrollment in Adult Education. The presumed goal of this bill is laudable, to have every student withdrawal from regular high school education be carefully considered for its appropriateness before a student can be enrolled in an adult education program, and to prevent students with difficult educational issues from being summarily assigned to adult education programs. However, this bill as written causes some confusion about who is and who will be eligible to attend adult education, and in its current form this bill may not help struggling students receive timely resolution of their educational issues.

Section 1 of this bill adds to the definition of eligibility for adult education "any person sixteen years of age or over who is granted special permission to enroll in an adult education program by the superintendent of schools for the district," and as one requisite for the superintendent's permission, the person must have "a written application from the parent or legal guardian of a minor student." This wording does not specify that the student must first withdraw from regular education to attend an adult education program, and therefore the bill appears to be creating a status of dual enrollment in both programs, which at the very least confuses the issues of a) responsibility for oversight of the

student's progress, b) access to support programs and services within regular education, and c) ultimately, funding sources for the student's education.

Section 2 of this bill mentions but does not clarify what is meant by the term "minor student," leaving questions of application to students 18 to 21 years of age, whom regular high school programs to some extent treat as still the responsibility of a parent or guardian, but for whom adult education currently requires no parental permission for attendance. We are also unclear as to whether this bill is meant to supercede the recently enacted change in the age of eligibility for adult education from 16 to 17 years of age or older, as of July 1, 2011.

Adult education programs provide service to both the districts that allocate their limited funding (on average, \$1,260 yearly per student in combined local and state funding) as well as to the students who seek to attain their educational goals with the help of adult education, often because of overwhelming personal problems. Because of the lack of clarity in this bill, we can't determine whether it will create obstacles that will limit timely and appropriate access to our programs, or will overwhelm some programs with a new category of dually enrolled students, or, as we think is its intention, will assure that all possible avenues of regular education assistance are exhausted before a student withdraws and accesses adult education.

We ask that the issues raised in this testimony be addressed so that both the intention and the likely effects of this bill are clear and promote the best interests of students.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.